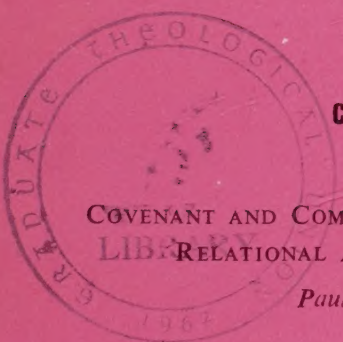


JEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION



COVENANT

COVENANT AND COMMUNITY : INSIGHTS INTO THE
RELATIONAL ASPECT OF COVENANT

Paul Kalluveettil

PROPHETS AND COVENANT COMMUNITY

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COVENANTAL ASPECT OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

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Editorial

The task of every religion in the past has been and still is to maintain the significance of and to strike the balance between the individual and community in the unfolding of it. On the one hand every religion endeavours to make the individual live an authentic life in accordance with the doctrine and principles of that religion; on the other hand it wants the individuals to relate among themselves and form a community of love and mutual recognition. The efforts made in view of these goals vary from religion to religion. Initiation rites, personal guidance, festivals, pilgrimages are but a few of the common endeavours found in religions to make their followers become aware of their personal and communitarian dimensions.

The biblical religion is perhaps the boldest attempt to uphold the individual and communitarian characteristics of religion, the clear proof of which is introduced in the call of Abraham (Gen 12: 1 - 3) and concluded in the making of the Sinai Covenant (Ex 19: 1 - 24: 11). In the Old Testament we have clear evidence of a religion struggling to combine the individual and the community, the emphasis sometimes swinging from one side to the other. In general it must be said that the Old Testament gave greater importance to the community than to the individual, so much so that the latter was almost getting lost in the former. Then a prophet like Jeremiah had to make it clear how each individual is responsible for his life. Condemning a traditional theory: "The parents ate the sour grapes, but the children got the sour taste", Jeremiah wrote: whoever eats sour grapes will have his own teeth set on edge; and everyone will die because of his own sin" (Jer 31: 29-30). Ezechiel continued the same tradition of individual responsibility (Ez 18: 1-32). In fact, the New Covenant about which both these prophets spoke was based on a balanced

understanding of community and individuals (Jer 31: 31-34; Ez 36:22-28).

Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant (Hb 9: 15), made this the point of departure for his new teaching. He wanted his hearers to effect a radical conversion within themselves and thus prepare themselves to form a new community. This was symbolically exemplified in the group of the Twelve to which he gave the memorial of the New Covenant, the Eucharist, as a permanent gift and challenge. The early Church struggled through its history to give an authentic expression to this newness with success and failures, but the Spirit of God was always guiding its maturing process. Theologians such as Paul and John contributed their share in defining the nature of this new community and their influence exerted lasting influence on the Church through the early centuries.

But it did not take long before the Church turned out to be another model of a juridical society characterised by legalism and jurisprudence where neither individual nor community had to play any role. The pyramidal understanding of the Church resulted in the total obscuring of the Covenant conception of the Church and it took many centuries for it to realise the tragedy of this fact.

The second Vatican Council once again took the bold step to liberate the Church from this chaotic situation and make it once again the community of persons, persons living in the community. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) is a clear proof of this renewed attempt to redeem the lost vitality of a covenant religion. The Chapter on the "people of God" makes it abundantly clear that the Church is essentially a community of persons united in Christ. At the same time this community is characterised as a pilgrim Church, a community on the march moving towards the goal (chapter 7).

Long before Vatican II, in some Catholic countries, efforts were being made to emphasize the dynamic, communi-

tarian and personal dimensions of Christian life and a good experiment along this line was the creation of 'basic ecclesial community' in the Latin American countries. As an impulse to renew the Church at the grass-root level, it is a new model of organizing and living the local Church within the hierarchical frame work taking into account the concrete realities of life. In 36 countries of Latin America alone such organised communities number over 100,000. It is all proof of a growing awareness in the Church that it has to be both a community and a community of persons related to each other.

The present issue of *Jeevadhara* is trying to analyse the various aspects of the basic reality underlying the community dimension of Christian life from the biblical point of view and it is found in the concept of the Covenant. Though the concept as such is derived from pre-biblical and extra-biblical background as well as from the day-to-day social life of Semitic people, it is the one concept that gives unity and vitality to the Old Testament and constitutes the bond between the Old and New Testaments. The concept underwent a process of transformation through the history of its evolution from the patriarchal times till it received a concrete form and content in the Sinai Covenant. But it still had to go through a further process of purification for it to become an authentic reality for a maturing humanity. It is what Jeremiah and Ezechiel did for the future of the biblical religion. Developing these insights Paul has presented a very dynamic understanding of the New Covenant as constituted in Jesus Christ. John in his writings has further developed the practical consequences of a covenanted life. The various studies in this issue of *Jeevadhara*, it is hoped, will throw light on these aspects of the Covenant and further the growth of an authentic community life.

Covenant and Community: Insights into the Relational Aspect of Covenant

Although the time of "pan-covenantalism" has passed for good, the concept of covenant still enjoys an enviable position in the Old Testament history and theology. The current biblical debate mainly revolves around the nature of covenant. Is it relational? In other words, does it create a state of union among the contracting parties? Or does it merely convey the idea of solemn commitment and the ensued obligations? The German scholar E. Kutsch advocates this latter view.¹ And his thesis has won wide acceptance. Kutsch's interpretation is rarely put to test.² Most authors take for granted its validity and build up their studies on this cornerstone. But the truth is far from it. Covenant is essentially a relational reality. This truth is illustrated here by bringing the covenant phenomenon of oral declaration of relationship into limelight.³

1) Methodological observations

Now clarification of terms is in order. Declaration means a formal statement by which something definite is announced with solemnity. We are concerned here with the declaration of covenant fellowship, that is, the state of union or community: the literary expression of this oral declarative act of fellowship is entitled here as Declaration Formula.

1. Cf. his book *Verheissung und Gesetz*. (BZAW 131) Berlin, 1973.

2. D. J. McCarthy is the only notable exception. See *Treaty and Covenant* (AB 21 A), Rome, 1978 and his articles mentioned in the bibliography of that book.

3. See P. Kalluveetil, *Covenant and Declaration* (AB 88), Rome, 1981 (in press).

Covenant was first rooted in the soil of secular life. This secular experience was later applied to the religious sphere to denote God-man relationship. Hence our investigation needs to proceed from the covenant declarative acts of fellowship in the Old Testament secular contexts. But this declaration formula of Old Testament secular covenants reflects a general reality found throughout the Ancient Orient. Hence we have to begin with a survey of the non-biblical declarative acts of covenant relationship.

2) Covenant declarations in the ancient near east

The historical documents of the Ancient Orient attest to the existence of five kinds of covenant Declaration Formula. These oral declarative acts exhibit various formulations and appear in different contexts.

We-all-one formula

The stipulation section of the treaty between the Hittite king Murshilish II and king Talmi-Sharruma of Aleppo refers to a sworn statement, made in the presence of the gods of both parties:⁴ "We all together and our house are one." This formula seems to have been enunciated by both parties at the treaty making ceremony. Here one's belonging to-the-other is affirmed in generic terms. This kind of formula, by itself, does not specify the nature of the relationship which can be that of equal or unequal partners. Our text indicates a superior-inferior relationship. By this oral declaration of the parties solemnly committed themselves to a life of fellowship, amity and fraternity. They became, so to say, one body and soul. This Hittite text does not mention any other covenant-making rite. The declaration of fellowship is then the only ceremony which realized the treaty between Kings of Hatti and Aleppo.

A fragmentary Ugaritic letter⁵, offers another instance of the generic formula: "As for me I have said: Everything of

4. E. Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien*, Leipzig, 1923, pp. 86-87.

5. J. Nougayrol, *Le Palais royal d'Ugarit*, Vol. IV, Paris, 1956, pp. 228-229.

my house is yours and everything of your house is mine." Here one commits himself to behave as if he and his ally belonged to the same family, his possessions really belonged to his ally and those of the partner to him.

Often the nature of oneness becomes more specified; the envisaged community finds concrete expressions in four types of formulae.

Vassal-Lord formula

"They took the oath of loyalty to Mushezib-Marduk declaring: We are vassals of the King of Assyria."⁶ The text refers to a covenant-making episode which consisted in swearing the vassalage of two leaders. They affirmed that they belong to the Assyrian king as vassals. Thus the declaration defined the nature of the treaty bond. The statement "we are vassals of the King of Assyria" includes in itself the whole idea of stipulations. The declaring leaders commit themselves to a life of submission and subservience, which will find concrete form in a set of obligations and rights. Thus one may say that the declaration formula expresses the whole treaty. This declaration of the inferior party served to effect the pact.

This text contains only a one way formula: only the inferior's relationship to the superior is stated. Instance of complete twofold formula are not lacking in the Ancient Near Eastern documents. To cite an instance, the famous Assyrian king Ashurbanipal recounts how the prince of Lydia, became his vassal!⁷ "..... he laid hold of my royal feet, saying: 'Thou art the King I am your slave' " The text does not mention any further procedure in enacting the treaty. This may mean that the inferior party's declaration of belonging to Ashurbanipal effected the pact. The I-thou twofold formula which expressed the mutual relationship completely, defined the nature of the covenant relationship.

6. R. F. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters*, Chicago, 1892-1914, No. 280 : r. 3.

7. M. Streck, *Assurbanipal*, Vol. 2, Leipzig, 1916, pp. 22-23.

Father-son formula

This formula implies the covenant fellowship between unequal partners. One's belonging-to-the-other is expressed in familial terms. A Mari letter published by G. Dossin provides an interesting instance.⁸ It concerns the installation of a new ruler at Carchemish, the vassal state of Zimri-Lim, king of Mari. Upon ascending the throne the son of the expired king, declares his own vassalage to Mari in the presence of the ambassador: "My father Aplahanda is not dead, he lives; Zimri-Lim is my father." The new vassal is then called "devoted Son" and the King of Mari blesses him with choicest gifts. The declaration of belonging to the overlord in filial vocabulary served to establish the covenant bond. By this act the new King accepted Zimri-Lim as his sovereign as well as all the obligations and rights that this vassalage implied. The superior party ratified the covenant relationship by bestowing the title of son and gifts upon the new ruler.

Brother formula

Also this type of oral Declaration Formula provides a familial dimension to a legal relationship. This frequently used formula appears in the royal correspondence of Khattu-shilish III of Hatti with the Babylonian king Kadashman-Ellil II;⁹ "when your father and I have concluded friendship and became brothers, we spoke: We are brothers, we should be the enemy of one who is an enemy to anyone of us, a friend to the one who is a friend of anyone of us." The text refers to the covenant-enacting scene when both of the parties solemnly enunciated their fellowship. This oral declarative act established a pact of brotherhood for defensive-offensive and equality purposes.

Friend formula

An oral declaration in terms of friendship occurs in a letter of King Burraburiash IV. He refers to the treaty-making

8. *Revue d'Assyrologie* 35 (1938) 120.

9. *Ceilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*, I. 10 : 57 - 59.

ceremonial thus : ¹⁰ "I and my brother pledged each other friendship and made this declaration: As our fathers were friends with each other, we truly will be friends." This statement of oneness enunciated by both parties, effected the pact as well as defined its nature: a fellowship between equals.

To sum up, every treaty Declaration Formula contains the idea of belonging-to-the other, either in generic or specific terms. They served to effect and affirm the covenant oneness. One may say, that the oral Declaration Formula contains the whole treaty; stipulations merely spell-out the idea underlying there, in a detailed and clear way. These oral declarative acts played a significant role in the realizing of a treaty.

3) Forms related to covenant formula

There exists a set of Declaration Formulae which though do not strictly speaking mark covenant relationship, nevertheless are related to it.

Royal formulae

They occur in enthronement scenes. We select a text concerning Marduk which speaks of how the gods assembled and declared Marduk as their king. It consisted in an oral affirmation: "Marduk is King." By this declaration of their belonging to him, they accepted Marduk's sovereignty and implicitly avowed their subservience to him. This Royal Formula defined and established the relationship between the parties.

Legal formulae

Formulae concerning adoption, slavery, service and marriage come under this category.

10. J. A. Knudtzon, *Dte El-Amarna Tafeln*, Leipzig, 1915, No. 8 : 8 - 12.

11. *Eluma elis* IV, 28; cf. also V, 86-88.

a) *Adoption*: An Old Assyrian letter illustrates the nature and function of the adoption formula: ¹² "I raised your son, but he said: 'you are not my father', and left me at once; I also raised your daughters, but they said: 'you are not our father, and they left me at once.'" These oral declarations of the adopted son and daughters brought out the annulment of their legal relationship to the writer of the letter. The formula used here seems to be the negative form of the formula by which the speaker once ratified the adoptive relationship. Now its negative form is used to cancel his present belonging to the other party.

b) *Slavery*: The 'negated' formulae are often used by the slaves to repudiate his legal belonging to the other party: "You are not my master"¹³ "you are not my mistress."¹⁴ These oral declarations, however, due to his status of a slave did not bring about the desired effect.

c) *Service*: Nuzi documents on Hapiru employ both positive and negative oral formulae to effect or repeal the service contracts:¹⁵ "The tongue of Iliutum spoke thus: 'We with our sons, with our wives and with our daughters are man-and-maid-servants to If Wahuluki should infringe (the agreement), leave the house and say thus: "I am not a maid-servant and my children are not servants"'"

d) *Marriage*: Positive and negative formulae were employed in the Ancient Near East to ratify or revoke the marriage bond. The declaration is always made in the presence of an official assembly. It admits different formulations: "You shall

12. *Cuneiform Texts from Capadocian Tablets from the British Museum*, 3. 6 b : 25, 29.

13. *The Code of Hammurabi*, 282.

14. M. Schorr, *Urkunden des Altbabylonischen Zivil- und Prozessrechts*, Leipzig, 1913, No. 35 : 6.

15. H. Greenberg, *The Hab/piru*, New Haven, 1965, No. 58, 63.

be my wife.”¹⁶ By this affirmation of his relationship to the other party, the husband solemnizes the marriage bond. Sometimes a twofold formula which expresses the mutual relationship is used: “She is my wife and I am her husband from this day forever”.¹⁷ The repudiation of relationship may be enunciated by both parties: “You are not my wife”¹⁸; “you are not my husband”.¹⁹

4) Covenant Declarations in the Old Testament: Secular Texts

The Old Testament follows the same covenant tradition of the ancient cultures of the Near East. It exhibits a generic formula “We All One” and two specific formulae: “Vasal-Lord” and “Brother”. Besides there occur forms related to covenant declaration formula.

We-all-one formula

This type of declaration occurs in three formulations. The first of it is enunciated by the King Jehoshaphat of Judah in response to the Israelite king’s request for military assistance: “I am as you are, my people as your people, my houses as your houses.” I Kg 22: 4; 2 Kg 3:7 and Chr 18: 3. What does this statement mean? The declaration occurs in a covenant background: the Jehoshaphat pericopes abound in covenant vocabulary (*slm*, a synonym for “make a covenant”: I Kg 22: 45; *hithbr*, another synonym which denotes a commercial pact: 2 Chr 20: 35, 37; “love”: 2 Chr 19: 2) and imply covenant custom (diplomatic marriage: 2 Chr 18: 1; 21: 6.) and stipulations (commercial co-operation: 2 Chr 20: 35-37; military help: I Kg 22; 2 Kg 3; I Chr 18). Thus one can say with certainty

16. S. A. Birnbaum, “The Kephars Bebhayyu Marriage Deed”, *JAOS* 78 (1958) 12 - 18: 3.

17. E. G. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri*, New Haven, 1953, 7: 4.

18. Schorr, 1: 9; 4: 14; 6: 13 - 14.

19. Schorr, 1: 14; 4: 9; 6: 16.

that I Kg 22: 4 offers a declaration of a covenant partner. The covenant oneness is expressed by Jehoshaphat in three phrases: his person, his people, his horses belong to his ally. The formulas reflect a general theme of the political pacts, social covenants and contracts of the Ancient Orient. These documents use analogous metaphors to express the idea of oneness, union, solidarity between the parties. The King of Judah, by this declaration, affirmed his belonging-to the king of Israel. He avowed his covenant loyalty which was manifested in his readiness to execute the desire of his partner.

The second text, I Chr 12: 17-19 recounts how groups from Judah and Benjamin joined forces with the fugitive David. As they approached him David greeted them saying that if they had sought him out for an alliance (*sālôm*), he would most willingly granted it to them (*hyh lēbāb leyāhad* is a synonym for covenant). Then they replied: "We are yours, David. we are with you, son of Jesse." This is a clear covenant declaration of their belonging to David. By these words they affirmed their oneness with him. They offered themselves as David's subjects and pledged subservience to him.

According to I Kg 20: 3-4, the besieging Benhadad demanded Ahab's surrender in these words: "Your silver and gold belong to me; your wives and dearest children belong to me." This was a categorical affirmation that Ahab and his possessions belonged to Benhadad. Taking this a demand to acknowledge the Aramean over-lordship, Ahab replied: "I and all I have are yours." By these words Ahab declared his vassalage to Benhadad.

Vassal formula

Occurs in Jos 9: 8; 2 Kg 16: 7; 10: 5-6 and I Sam 27: 12. It is the inferior party who declared his belonging-to-the-other as a vassal in the texts from Joshua and the Kings. By this declaration he committed himself to a life of subordination and subservience. The weaker party's declaration, by itself, cannot effect a covenant; the stronger person has to confirm the declared relationship. An implicit ratifying act by

the superior is recorded in the Joshua text: the Israelites partook of the Bibeonite provisions. 2 Kg 10: 6 refers to the verbal response of Jehu: he ratified the nobles' vassal declaration by stating that they belonged to him ("Indeed, you are mine"). He used then a generic formula, a declaration formula of the "We are one" type. 2 Kg 16, the Ahaz text does not mention any ratifying act of the pact. Instead, the author proceeds to report the result of the established covenant: the overlord came to the vassal's rescue. This means that the mere mention of the standard declaration formula was enough to indicate the conclusion of a covenant. Thus in Jos 9, 2 Kg 16 and 2 Kg 10 the enunciation of the declaration formula, together with the ensued gesture of consent, effected the covenant relationship. The purpose of the oral declarative act was not simply to open covenant negotiations; rather, it served as a covenant constituting act. Jos 9 refers to an additional rite, an oath: the swearing was concerned with the stipulations. The fourth text, I Sam 27:12 speaks of a re-confirming act of the existing vassal relationship. It is the superior party who pronounced the declaration formula. By affirming the inferior's relationship to him, Achish established David as an eternal vassal. The declaration formula was enough to create the enunciated relationship.

The declaration formulae in all these 4 texts are one-way formulae in nominal form. Only 2 Kg 10 reflects a reciprocal formula (Jehu's words, "Indeed, you are mine"). All these Declaration Formulae (except Jehu's words) define the nature of the relationship, it was that of vassalage. Ahaza text adds the filial element to his declaration (I am your vassal and your son") to express his *total* submission and loyal subservience to the Assyrian king.

The Declaration Formula, one can say, implies all the covenant stipulations: oral declaration of vassalage signifies a commitment to a life of subservience and loyalty, in other words, a life of obligations and the ensuing privileges.

Brother formula

I Kg 20: 31-34 offers an instance of this formula.

The making of the covenant is centred on the oral declaration of Ahab, "He is my brother". By this declaration Aha made the enemy who approached him for vassalage, his brother and friend. The Aramean party accepted the new relationship by affirming, "your brother Benhadad". This reciprocal oral declarative acts established the covenant relationship as well as defined its nature: a parity pact. These declarations were followed by the elucidation of covenant commitments.

5) Forms related to declaration formula

Slave formula

We are two texts with this type of oral declarative acts. Gen 44: 16 and 50: 18 concern Joseph and his brothers. Jacob's sons declared themselves as slaves of the Egyptian governor. They affirmed that they belonged to him as slaves.

Kinship formula

According to Jg 9: 2-3 Abimelech who wanted to become the ruler of Israel, made an appeal to the men of Shechem, saying: "I am truly your bone and your flesh." These words had a magic effect on the people. All of them rallied around him saying: "He is our brother." With this avowal they confirmed what was declared by him. They accepted him as their kinsman and committed themselves to his cause. The formula used by Abimelech can be entitled "Kinship formula". Analogous formulae occur also in Gen 2: 23; 29: 14; 2 Sam 5: 1; 19: 13-14.

The Old Testament also exhibits traces of formulae concerning kingship (2 Kg 8: 13; 2 Sam 15: 10), adoption (Ps 2: 7) and marriage (Hos 2: 4).

Conclusion

The Declaration Formula indicates a union established by an explicit verbal action. The idea, "I am yours, you are mine" underlies every covenant declaration. This implies a quasifamilial bond which makes sons and brothers. The act of accepting the other as one's own, reflects the basic idea of

covenant. an attempt to extend the bond of blood beyond the kinship sphere, or, in other words, to make the partner one's own "bone and flesh". The study of the declaration formula has shown that covenant is relational. Hence any attempt to reduce it to a one-way commitment is to be rejected.

The oral declarations of relationship are not a substitute for oath. Both of them are important covenant elements, but destined to fulfil different functions. Oath has stipulations as its object, one swears to the observance of the covenant terms. This act makes the pact binding and ensures the loyalty of the partners. The declaration formula, on the other hand, is concerned with the covenant union; it serves to affirm and effect the relationship. Although the idea of relationship is inherent in every pact, it is not essential that it should be explicitly enunciated at every covenant making scenes. Other rites such as meals, gifts, handshake can effect the union.

A study of the relational aspect of covenant will be incomplete, if the reality of religious covenant is left unmentioned. The so called "Bundesformel" occurs frequently in the Old Testament.²⁰ A complete formula reads: "I will be their God and they shall be my people." This formula reflects the reality of the secular Declaration Formula. The differences in the "Sitz im Leben" of the two formulae deserve special mention. The Declaration Formula is a *hic et nunc* affirmation of the relationship by which the covenant union is effected. The "Bundesformel", on the other hand, often denotes a promise; the relationship will be eventually realized. And in most instances it is the superior party who enunciates the formula.

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20. See the studies of R. Smend, *Bundesformel*, Zurich, 1961; N. Lohfink, "Dt 26, 17-19 und die Bundesformel", *ZKT* 91 (1969) 517-553.

Prophets and Covenant Community

At first there is a certain embarrassment in treating prophets and covenant, for, apart from some obscure passages in Hosea they make no significant use of the word. They simply condemn or exhort without reference to it. This has led many to conclude that covenant was not important to them and so it was not as basic to the actual course of Israel's religion as the Bible text's account of that course makes it seem. The standard reply to this has it that covenant had been corrupted into a guarantee of God's favour no matter how the people acted so that the prophets avoided the word to avoid the corrupt understanding tied to it.

Both the problem and the answer assume too much, a univocal concept of covenant, a concept without history and without local differences. In fact, covenant was expressed in many forms, symbolized by different signs and acts, marked by diverse particular demands. The proper procedure is to consider the central elements of covenant whatever its form. These are; a firm commitment between persons with its expression or definition, the guide-lines for behavior expressed or implied by that commitment. Do these elements work in prophecy? Is the thing there without the name? In fact, those passages especially characteristic of the prophets, their impassioned pleas for obedience or condemnations of disobedience of God's demands reveal much when studied from this point of view.

As early as the reign of David the prophet Nathan could condemn the most powerful Hebrew, the king, for adultery and murder.¹ This was not the way the ordinary king was

1. 2 Sam 12 : 1 - 15.

treated in Palestine. He was above the law and took what he wanted, as Jezebel points out in her sneering contrast between the king of Israel and a "real king".² The contrast was indeed there. The king had to respect his neighbour like anyone else, and David accepts this in his confession: "I have sinned against the LORD".³ He had not infringed any religious law, but still an attack on a neighbor was a sin directly against God.

The earliest "writing" prophet, that is, prophet whose sayings have come down to us in a book, Amos, is almost entirely taken up with problems of justice. He condemns those who accumulate wealth at their neighbor's cost. He condemns the arrogant ease of the rich when there is want in the land. His condemnations are not mere words; they are warnings of the imminent acts of God to punish the oppressors. As in the case of David human rights are closely linked to the divine. God is somehow one with His people, a guide who warns them by prophecy⁴ and enforces his benign will against the recalcitrant.

A full century later the prophets are still pounding on this same theme. Micah castigates those who grow great by swallowing up the holdings of the little man and even enslaving his person, those who devour God's people and then have the arrogance to turn to that God for favours.⁵ Isaiah of Jerusalem is a more sophisticated figure than the countryman Amos and his contemporary Micah, but he is at one with them in this. He condemns those who make themselves richer by making the poor poorer. Such men disgust him, "set his teeth on edge".⁶ They are making a terrible error because they think religion is only a matter of respect for the sacred and so the proper performance of rites. Far from this lies the truth: the

2. 1 Kgs 21 : 7.

3. 2 Sam 12 : 13.

4. Am 3 : 7 - 8.

5. Mic 2 : 2; 3 : 1 - 4.

6. Is 5 : 8 - 10; 5 : 2, where the reference is to bitter fruit that puckers the mouth.

holiness of the LORD is his justice.⁷ One cannot mistreat one's neighbour, God's people, and pretend to respect the "holy", that is, what is united with and touched by Him. Such non-sensical ideas can only lead to ruin. This exact point is repeated a century later in Jeremiah's horror at the injustice done in the re-enslavement of Hebrew slaves whom the great had sworn to free (as in law they were bound to do in any case⁸). These great ones made no bones about it: they explicitly turned injustice into perjury, a rejection of God Himself.⁹

So far we have seen the prophets concerned for the community because, as Isaiah makes clear, the community somehow shared in God's holiness, the very character marking Him off from creatures. Hosea takes us farther in the direction of covenant. He says that those who violate the Torah transgress the covenant.¹⁰ In part this is the old story, for these people are separating "religion" from right action. At the very moment of violating Torah they claim to 'recognize' (Hebrew *yāda'*, a word from the vocabulary of treaties and covenant).¹¹ Nor could the transgressors excuse themselves because the right action required of them was ill-defined or exotic. Hosea is quite clear about what right action is: it prohibits lies, murder, theft, adultery.¹² Further, there is a definite group responsible for transmitting these traditions and so to produce right action. These are the priests.¹³ Hosea, then, knows a community in the proper sense. That is, an ordered social group and not just a haphazard conglomerate,

7. Is 5 : 16.

8. Cf. Deut 15 : 12.

9. The whole sad experience of Jeremiah is reported in Jer 34.

10. Hos 8 : 1 b.

11. 8 : 2 b. For *yāda'* 'see D. J. McCarthy, S. J., *Treaty and Covenant*.² *Analecta biblica* 21A, Rome, 1978, 167, n. 22, with references to the pertinent literature.

12. Hos 4 : 2.

13. 4 : 4.

for there are definite roles, for instance, for priests, and so structures. A covenant is explicitly part of the structure, a rare affirmation from a prophet. Indeed, it is normative; for violating covenant is the same as violating the basic traditions (*torah*) of the community, and this covenant community does have a clear set of demands which define it. Ch. 4: v. 2, in fact sounds like an allusion to the commandments, those basic guide-lines for keeping a community alive by keeping it united.¹⁴ It is observing these demands which is true recognition of God, the knowledge (*da'at*, the noun of *yāda'*, the covenant word we have already noticed) demanded in v. 1. Sovereign recognition of God, then, is to be *lived* through respect for one's neighbour. This is parallel with Isaiah's demand for justice for God's people because He is holy; therefore all that is His including His people is holy and it is a profanation to misuse it. It is also the context of Jeremiah's identification of injustice with an insult to God.

In some ways, then, Hosea expresses most clearly the heart of prophetic teaching. Perhaps this is because he is from the northern kingdom, Israel, more prosperous and vigorous, where Yahwism developed conscious expressions of its character more rapidly than in Judah. In any case, he insists that the basis of Yahwism is exclusive fidelity to the LORD,¹⁵ a favorite theme in Jeremiah and Ezekiel too. However, this devotion to the LORD cannot be selective. If you take the LORD you take Him whole, and that means taking His community too. One cannot serve the LORD without serving His very own. Hence Hosea and the other prophets, we have seen, emphasize the central elements of social justice, respect for

14. Many deny a reference to the commandments because Hosea does not cite them in canonical order and conclude that the commandments were as yet unknown. The same argument would show they were unknown in NT times since they are cited out of order (Mk 10: 19 parr.), as they are in many of our own off-hand references. Obviously the argument has no weight.

15. See, for example, 2: 2-13 (Heb 5-18).

the person: hence no violence; for the family: no adultery; for the necessities of life, a share of material necessities and some social order: hence no robbery and no lying. So the great prophets cry out against injustice not from mere humanitarian motives but from respect for the LORD and all that is His.

Materially if not formally this is the very stuff of covenant. Further, one can see a connection with covenant if he pursues the obvious question: How could the prophets assume unquestioningly the people's knowledge of its duties? The prophets do not teach morality, they announce judgment according to norms the accused know. And why is this not merely natural law, a knowledge of what is due to human nature? Why is it an integral part of religion, of the service of the LORD and a major concern of His whose will insists on the norms?

Once more among the prophets Hosea has explicitly what the others assume. One's knowledge of what total service of God meant was to come through the priests, the responsible custodians of the traditional knowledge of the LORD. One must assume that this was no affair of classes, a kind of "Sunday school". On the contrary, it was supposed to be universally known. It was not simply for those free or willing to give time to study but literally for all. Among the ancient Hebrews this could mean but one thing. Without newspapers or schools or town meetings or whatever else, only worship, the cult, brought all the people together so that all could be approached. It must have been here that the special demands of the LORD were proclaimed over and over, feast after feast, until they were the heritage of a whole people. Hence the role of the priests: they were the custodians of worship and the word proclaimed in it.

There is confirmation of all this in Lev. 19. It is from Priestly traditions. It is deeply involved with holiness, the basic concern of cult. The people are to be holy because they belong to a holy God. It even gives examples of what it means to be a holy people: Naturally enough, these deal

much with the directly religious, the proper ways and conditions of ritual. But there is much more. The holy people not only worship, they treat their neighbours fairly because they too are to be respected as part of the holy people. The chapter gives examples of the justice and even charity which this means. As we noted, the chapter is Priestly, part of a late level OT of writing. However, it is a chapter, an insert into a whole which may be late as a whole but is not so in all its parts. In fact, the chapter contains old traditions and provides us a sample of the sort of teaching which made the "liturgical readings" of the various cult centres and the various feasts of ancient times.¹⁶ It shows concretely how the ideas the prophets assumed the people to be aware of, were transmitted to the people.

These cultic traditions are of enormous importance for the history and theology of covenant and community in Israel. Theories about Israelite origins differ, but just about all agree that the community was not simply given by common race or nationality. Israel was a community of peoples with disparate origins who came together more or less freely—we must not wholly ignore the social pressures from outside and inside the group which limited freedom to some extent to serve the LORD. The important bond was the religion these groups adopted. For example, only a small group actually experienced the exodus. Others were "converted" and chose to adhere to the Saviour God of the exodus. Therefore, the basic unity of the Hebrews was built on their religion, and the basic religious act was worship. It was in the cult on the feast days that the people learned and experienced liturgically who God was and who they were.

16. See K: Elliger, *Leviticus*. Handbuch zum AT 1/4Tübingen, 1966, 242–263, with an elaborate analysis of various stages of tradition in the text. One can hardly believe that we can fix dates and relations among fragments of text as is done here. What is important is the demonstration of an ancient, basic layer.

And who was this God? He was their Lord, Protector and Saviour. To Him they owed all. But He was a Lord like this over a people He had sought and who had received Him. They had begun as a gradually increasing group of "converted" peoples. These peoples became one people because they were freely united to this Lord. So they were near Him, a chosen people set apart and holy, something not to be mishandled, to suffer oppression and injustice especially from one another. Any move that harmed the people even in its least members was an attack on the LORD to whom it belonged, a kind of desecration. Put positively unity, justice, fraternal aid, were obvious demands not simply as acts proper to one's fellow creatures but as service and honour to the God to whom they were committed, a kind of service and honour He had demanded.

Divine choice, human response, a divine will defining and demanding total fidelity not merely to the divine person but to His people: all the elements of covenant are here in the historical experience and the liturgical memory of the Hebrews. They were expressed and affirmed in the cult. Because they were, the prophets could make their case against a miscreant people. They could make their fierce demands for fidelity, justice and brotherliness. They were simply demanding that the people live as the chosen and consenting community of the LORD it proclaimed and represented itself to be in act in the cult.

Thus to return to our beginning, the prophets' insistence on preserving the community of God's people through justice and mutual respect is based on a practical covenant, though they do not use the name. They are speaking to the people as the covenanted people, parties to a free union among persons with the concomitant definition of that union. "Concomitant definition" sounds formidable, but it is no more than the reality, the solid shape of the covenant union. It is what makes a covenant of friendship different from a marriage covenant and both very different from a covenant to join side by side in a fight. The Hebrew's union with the [God

who had chosen them and whom they had accepted¹⁷ with the guide-lines God gave them first of all through the liturgy was a covenant, whether the technical Hebrew word for covenant, *berit*, was applied to it or not. It should have created a community of justice, respect and mutual help. It did not, and the prophets fulminated against the people because they failed in this, in living as the covenanted people of God should. The prophets condemn to root out disunion; they promise to encourage justice and respect. The great prophets came too early to express all this in the exact theological covenant terminology worked out only in Dueteronomy. Still, they spoke from too their intensely lived covenant experience and their urgent feelings that the people must live up to this. Literally, they "set before" the people the choice of "life and good, death and evil", as a great covenantal exhortation has it.¹⁸

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17. Deut 26 : 17-19.

18. Deut 30 : 15.

Pauline Understanding of the New Covenant

How much importance did Paul give to the concept of the covenant in his writings? Years ago H. A. A. Kennedy wrote: "The conception (of the New Covenant) as such is of subordinate value for Paul's thought. He has laid hold so exclusively of one vital element in it that complementary aspects drop out of sight."¹ In a more recent article W. C. Van Unnik insists on the necessity of understanding the theology of Paul from the idea of the New Covenant.² These two views are opposed to each other and it is typical of how scholars differ on basic theological issues.

What should be the Christian attitude to Paul's understanding of the New Covenant? Paul, a very profound theologian of the early Church, a rabbinic theologian in his own right, did he discard the concept of covenant so basic to the Old Testament? For Paul Christ is the "end (*telos*) of the law" (Rom 10:4), understood as the goal and purpose of the Old Testament. If so, how could he abandon the concept of the Covenant from his new theological stand-point?

The main issue, it seems, is to understand what the fundamental presupposition is in such a discussion. Are we discussing about terminology? Could we argue that Paul did not give any weight to a covenant conception of the Christ-

1. H. A. A. Kennedy, "The Significance and Range of Covenant Conception in the New Testament", *Expositor* VIII, 10 (1915) 395.

2. W. C. Van Unnik, "La conception paulinienne de la nouvellle alliance" in *Litterature et Theologie pauliniennes*, Louvain, 1960, pp. 109-126. J. Pathrapankal, *Metanoia, Faith, Covenant: A Study in Pauline Theology*, Bangalore, 1971, pp. 178-199.

event precisely because he did not use [the covenant terminology in describing this reality? If this is a valid position, the same thing can be said about the Old Testament prophets who used the term *berit* so sparingly but whose theology was basically a covenant theology. The more important issue is the reality and the inner vitality of the covenant which together with the occasional use of terminology give a correct perspective of Paul's understanding of the New Covenant.

Covenant terminology in the Pauline Letters

We have to distinguish two types of covenant terminology in Pauline Letters, the first group referring to the Old Covenant and the second to the New. Besides these, there is a series of expressions regarding the Christian dispensation, which has to be understood as originating from Paul's conviction that the Christ-event has established the New Covenant.

The occurrences of *diathēkē* as the translation of the Hebrew *berit* in the Pauline Letters are few. But, for Paul, the Covenant theology is not always a matter of terminology.³ Paul uses *diathēkē* nine times in his Letters. Once it is a citation from Is 59: 20-21 with a reference to Jer 31:33ff., where Paul is dealing with the problem of the conversion of Jews (cf. Rom 11:26-27). In Rom 9:4 *diathēkē* occurs as one of the privileges of Israel.⁴ In Eph 2:12 Paul recalls the misery of the Gentile Christians in their pre-Christian existence, when they had no part in]the covenants of promise. In 2 Cor 3:14 there is a reference to the reading of the Old Covenant by the Jews, with a veil covering their heart.⁵

3. W. C. Van Unnik, *art. cit.*, p. 11.

4. In some manuscripts we have 'the Covenants' and in p. 46 it is 'the Covenant'. The plural form may refer to the series of Covenants in the early period of Israel's history. Cf. Wis 18: 22; 2 Mac 8: 15; Sir 44:12. In Ex 2:24 there is mention of the Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

5. This is the only place where the Sinai Covenant is called 'Old Covenant' (*palaiā diathēkē*).]

After a personal appeal to the Galatians (Gal 4:12-20), Paul resumes his contrast between the Old and the New Covenants (Gal 4:21-31), which he had started explaining in Gal 3:6. Paul brings in two historical figures for the contrast between the two covenants of the history of salvation, namely, Sara and Hagar. He uses historical as well as geographical arguments to support his theological stand. What Paul has in view is the existence of two divine dispensations, the one leading to slavery and earth-bound existence and the other effecting freedom and heaven-ward movement.⁶

Now we come to two Pauline statements on the New Covenant, namely, his witness to the words of Jesus at the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:23 ff) and his reference to the sublimity of the New Covenant in comparison with the Old Covenant (2 Cor 3:4-18). The former has to be seen within the wider context of the Synoptic tradition. The covenantal significance of the Last Supper and the Eucharist will be discussed below. The latter gives a detailed analysis of the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant and the uniqueness of the ministers of the New Covenant. The background of this whole discussion is found in the prophecies of Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34) and Ezechiel (Ez 36:22-28).

Paul uses a series of expressions which have a Covenantal connotation, such as his reference to the Christian community of Galatia as the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16) to which the Israel according to flesh (1 Cor 10:18) is opposed. 'Israel' is evidently a covenantal term (Rom 9:6).⁷ The whole treatise on the problem of Israel in Rom 9-11 is Paul's last attempt to convince both the Jews and [the Gentiles that the new dispensation is essentially and radically the continuation and consummation of the Old Covenant. Paul envisions the

6. H. J. Schoeps calls this interpretation of Paul "an utter violation of the basic rule of rabbinical hermeneutics". Cf. *Paul* (ET), London, 1961, p. 238, note 3.

7. Cf. Gen 32:28; Rom 11:2; 2 Cor 11:22.

new people as not entirely distinct from the old people of God, but as grafted into the old (Rom 11:13-22).

Pauline understanding of the Christ-event as the New Covenant

Our analysis of the covenantal terminology in Pauline Letters prepares us to see the central thought Paul had in his theological reflection about the Christ-event which he understood as the New Covenant. According to him the New way of salvation accomplished by God in Jesus Christ is the realization of the New Covenant promised by Yahweh in the Old Testament (Rom 3:21). The basic structure of the Letter to the Romans seems to confirm this idea. The two basic themes of this Letter - the theme of the salvific justice and faithfulness of God effecting the justification of man (Rom 1-4), and the theme of the love of God guaranteeing the salvation of man through the three-fold liberation and the granting of the Spirit of sonship (Rom 5-8) - are both expressions of the covenant relation of Yahweh to Israel in the Old Testament. The revelation of the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ in the eschatological 'Now' (Rom 3:21) is something to which the Law and the Prophets already bear witness. The juxtaposition of righteousness and love is the underlying idea of covenant theology (Lev 26:42).

The Christ-event as the New Covenant establishes a new point of convergence for humanity. It is on the one hand the continuation and final realization of the covenant tradition established in the Old Testament. On the other hand it is something that transcends the national and racial character of the Old Covenant. In the transcendent reality of the person of Christ the New Covenant takes on a new meaning as well as new dimensions. That is why Paul says: "Now the saving righteousness of God is manifested apart from the law, even though the Law and Prophets gave their witness to it" (Rom 3:21). As such it means a Covenant in which any one could have a membership on the basis of the unique requirement, namely, faith (Rom 3:22). Whereas all had sinned and had fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), God has opened a new way of approach to him, which is open to both Jews

and Gentiles alike. The righteousness of God, therefore, takes on a new meaning and a new dimension.

It is precisely this thought that Paul develops in the Letter to the Ephesians. The broken relationship between Jews and God, between Gentiles and God, and between Jews and Gentiles is made into a new relationship in the person of Jesus Christ, who makes both of them into a new people by breaking down the dividing wall of hostility. Christ abolished the Jewish Law with its commandments and rules, in order to create out of the two races one new people in union with himself. By his death on the Cross Christ destroyed their enmity; by means of the cross he united both races into one body and brought them back to God. Through Christ all, both Jews and Gentiles, are able to come in the one Spirit in the presence of the Father (Eph 2:11-18).

For Paul the New Covenant is something unique not only from the point of view of its membership but also because of its inner vitality and dynamism. Whereas the Old Covenant was all a written code carved in letters on stone tablets, the New Covenant is one of the Spirit, the Spirit that gives life, written on tablets of human hearts (2 Cor 3:3-7). Taking the thought-patterns from Jeremiah and Ezechiel Paul analyses the abiding and inner power of the New Covenant and rejoices in the sublimity and splendour of this new dispensation. Paul writes: "If the dispensation of death, (meaning the Old Covenant) carved in letters on stone, came with such splendour . . . will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendour? For if there was splendour in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendour . . . What once had splendour has come to have no splendour at all, because of the splendour that surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendour, what is permanent must have much more splendour."⁸ Paul

8. In the section 2 Cor 3:7-11 the Greek word 'doxa' and its combination occur 10 times and this Greek word is reminiscent of the Hebrew word *Kabod*.

thus concludes to the excellence and uniqueness of the New Covenant.

The community of the new covenant

Paul takes special care to explain the various aspects of the community that is now called the New Covenant community. Basically it is the Church, not understood as an institution but as the concrete expression of the people belonging to the new dispensation. Constituted as it is by human beings irrespective of their social and racial characteristics, the Church as the New Covenant community is a new reality. Paul uses various imageries to illustrate this and many of them have the aspect of 'new' (*kainos*) as characteristic of it. Thus Paul speaks about the 'New Creation' (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), the 'New Man' (Eph 2:15), the "new person" in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28), the "new temple" of God (1 Cor 3:16-17). According to Paul the reality of the New Covenant is not an exclusively eschatological reality; it is something here and now, related to this world and to be exercised in this world.

Deriving the analogy from the stoic thought of understanding the inhabitants of a city as a *soma politikon*, Paul speaks of the community of the New Covenant as the body of Christ. Through the imagery of the 'body' Paul brings out the unity and diversity of this community. At the same time this community is presented as a dynamic and living one. Through the rite of baptism the members are incorporated into Christ and into the Church.⁹ It is true that Paul does not elaborate a systematic theology of baptism in relation to the concept of the New Covenant. But the fundamental idea Paul has about baptism is the formation of the new community. For Paul it is an event through which discriminations of all sorts, social, racial and even sexual, are abolished (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; 1 Cor 12:13). Baptism sacramentally enacts the full significance of the Christ-event for the believers and

9. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, London, 1962, *passim*.

the community of the believers constitute one new humanity (Gal 3:28).¹⁰

Whereas the Old Covenant consisted of three realities: Yahweh, Israel and the mediating Covenant Law as an external expression of the Covenant relationship, the New Covenant does not have such an external mediating principle. It is exclusively and immediately a personal relationship. That is why Paul could write to the Corinthians: "You yourselves are the letter we have, written in our hearts for everyone to know and read. It is clear that Christ himself wrote this letter and sent it by us" (2 Cor 3:3). The idea of 'corporate personality'¹¹, already found in the Old Testament, has its clearest expression in the concept of the community as developed by Paul.^{11a}

The most important reality that characterises the New Covenant and makes it new and unique is the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit, who is called the 'law of the Spirit of life' (Rom 8:2). What the Law of the Old Covenant could not do, because human nature was weak, God now did in the New Covenant. God took this step so that the righteous demands of the Old Covenant might be fulfilled in this new era (Rom 8:3-4). Consequently, the Spirit of God is the concrete reality characterising the community of the New Covenant. The experience of this Spirit is something taken for granted (cf. Gal 3:2-5). The Spirit makes the believers realise that they are the children of God and they are enabled to address God 'Abba, Father' (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). It is the

10. It is important to note that Paul uses here the masculine *heis* and not the neuter *hen*, the former meaning the complete personalistic character of the community that is formed in and with Christ.

11. H.W. Robinson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality" in *Werden und Wesen des AT* (BZAW 66) Berlin, 1930, pp. 49-66.

11*. R. P. Shedd, *Man in community*, Michigan. 1964, pp 93 ff.

same Spirit who enables the members of the New Covenant to live in accordance with the demands postulated by the Covenant. It is a life that is superior to the law and base desires of human nature which Paul calls the 'flesh' (*sarx*). Through this Spirit all believers are sanctified and consequently Paul addresses all Christians as 'saints' (*hagioi*), a concept basic to the covenant in the Old Testament (Ex 19:6).

The inter-relationship of the members of this New Covenant is no more a juridical and legal one. It is one that is exclusively based on love which is the first fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). For Paul the decisive factor and criterion in any issue that has inter-personal dimensions is *agape* which is the sum and substance of all laws and commandments (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8-10). This love, as Paul understands it, is not a feeling or emotion; rather it is a constant and consistent attitude to life that should regulate all the activities of the believers (1 Cor 13:1-13).

The Corinthians had their own doubts about the inner vitality of their community. For them the Church was more a loose federation of groups and parties vying with each other. This conflict was visible in many issues such as in the celebration of the *agape* and in the use of charisms. As the Corinthians disputed about the superiority of one charism over the other, Paul made them realise that what is more important is not the charisms but the giver of all charisms, namely, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables the believers to make their act of faith and he also distributes the various charisms among the believers for the common good (1 Cor 12:1-7). Paul went on to compare the Corinthian community with a human body in which the many parts of it work together for the total well-being of the body. What Paul wanted to drive home to the Corinthians is that theirs is a community of persons closely knit together through the Holy Spirit and joined to Christ who is the Head.

The Cult of the New Covenant

The Old Covenant community was essentially a cultic one. It is now the commonly accepted view of Old Testament

scholars that the very matrix in which the community of the Old Covenant expressed and experienced its covenant consciousness and grew up as a community was the cultic celebration. It is true that in later times cult was divorced from the meaning of the covenant and the prophets had to criticise the people for the same (Am 5:21-27; Is 1:11-17). But the basic idea of the cult was the continued experience of God's covenant love and fidelity, and the Old Testament gives us ample proof of the influence of cult in the formation of the Hebrew community.¹² It was in the cult that the covenantal traditions were preserved and transmitted to the posterity, such as the Exodus event and the making of the Sinai Covenant.

For Paul the community of the New Covenant is essentially a cultic community. The supreme expression of this cult is the celebration of the Eucharist. Paul has given us the most ancient tradition about the institution of the Lord's Supper and he has added his own theological reflection about the meaning of this event (1 Cor 11:23-34). He refers to it as something which he received from the Lord and handed over to the Corinthian community. The blessing over the cup has clear reference to the New Covenant sealed with the blood of Jesus (v. 25). Both the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup are to be continued in the community in memory of him (*anamnesis*). Then Paul adds his own theological reflection: "Every time you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (v. 26). The meaning of this statement is important. The Eucharistic celebration has its reference to the past, present and the future. The celebration in the present proclaims the death of the Lord and this proclamation will continue until he comes. The symbolical and sacramental re-presentation of the death of Jesus is related to his real death which we have already seen as the central event of the New Covenant. The Covenant

12. Cf. A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, London, 1962, pp. 23-51.

community participates in this event and experiences the significance of it and it prepares itself for the parousia which will be the consummation of the New Covenant.

Paul was writing to the Corinthians in the context of their lack of discernment in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. For them it was nothing more than a social meal, in which they thought they can bring in all their party spirit and selfishness. But Paul exhorts them to examine themselves first and then eat the bread and drink from the cup. They have first of all to recognise (*diakrinein*) the meaning of the Lord's body when they eat the bread and drink from the cup. In the absence of it they bring judgement (*krima*) on themselves as they eat and drink. The implied idea is that the Eucharistic participation is the vital context in which the believers experience their covenantal belongingness to God and to their fellowmen and any negligence or misunderstanding about it can bring about very serious consequences.

It is within the context of this dynamic understanding of the covenantal significance of the Eucharist that we have to see the negative tone of Paul's attitude towards the sacrifice of non Christians. The association of believers with Christ in the Eucharist is so real and vital that nothing could happen that may violate the sanctity of the union with Christ and the Christians. Paul writes: "I speak to you as sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup we use in the Lord's Supper and for which we give thanks to God: When we drink from it, we are sharing in the blood of Christ. And the bread we break: when we eat it, we are sharing in the body of Christ. Because there is the one loaf of bread, all of us, though many, are one body, for we all share the same loaf" (1 Cor 10:15-17). The Lord's Supper constitutes a real community both with the believers and Christ and also between the believers themselves. Any departure from the sublimity of this union and relationship will run counter to the meaning of the New Covenant.

This high ideal set for the practice of the community becomes a permanent reminder in Pauline paraenesis. Paul

does not tolerate any compromise. According to him a conviction and consequent commitment once made cannot brook indifference and negligence. Through a typical rabbinical exegesis Paul brings out the danger involved in such a compromise. The people of the Old Covenant after their baptism into Moses, and their participation in the spiritual bread of manna, rebelled against Yahweh and were punished. Paul warns the members of the New Covenant not to imitate them and become objects of God's wrath (1 Cor 10: 1-11). The New Covenant is something more radical and profound and the relationship that is established therein cannot be carelessly handled.

What is perhaps more vital about the cultic dimension of the New Covenant is not so much its celebration of the Lord's Supper as the very cultic tone the life of every Christian should develop. The external expression of cult is to be the natural manifestation of the life of worship. Christian life as such should be a real sacrifice. Paul writes: "Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship you should offer" (Rom 12: 1). As members of the New Covenant community the life of the believers should be characterised as living sacrifice whereby they commit themselves to God's service. Paul goes on to explain in what this sacrificial and cultic aspect of Christian life consists: "Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this passing world; but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God - what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect" (Rom 12: 2). Paul is here dwelling on the personal dimension of a covenant existence and it is this personal perfection that will prepare anyone for an authentic sharing in the community. It is this inner authenticity that will enable the believers to express their social relationships, as explained by Paul in Rom 12: 3-21.

Our analysis of the Pauline understanding of the New Covenant has shown how Paul is trying to develop the dynamism of Christian life both in its personal and communitarian

dimensions along the Covenant tradition, in which he was brought up as a Pharisee. In the post exilic Judaism Covenant had become so much identified with the Thora. Once Paul realised the insufficiency of the Thora for making man authentic, he began to analyse the rich tradition Jeremiah and Ezechiel had developed in which the law become an interiorised reality. Before Paul the Qumran community had already cherished the expectation of the New Covenant insofar as they considered the promise of the New Covenant (Jer 31 : 31-34) as something to be fulfilled in their midst and they called themselves "the new covenant in the land of Damascus".¹³ They expected that the New Covenant would be established on a Pentecost day which, according to Jewish tradition, was the day on which the Sinai Covenant was established.¹⁴ The early Church experienced the outpouring of the Spirit on the same day and the community of the New Covenant was constituted in Jerusalem which believed in the divinity and Messiahship of Jesus Christ.

Ministers of the New Covenant

A discussion on the Pauline understanding of the New Covenant would be incomplete without an analysis of the role and function of the ministers of the New Covenant as Paul understands it. According to Paul the sublimity and excellence of the New Covenant have some definite characteristics. Since the New Covenant is established in the very person of Jesus Christ, the ministers of the New Covenant are to be characterised by their inner relationship with Christ and personal integrity. It is in this sense that Paul calls the apostles the aroma of Christ: "we are like a sweet-smelling incense offered by Christ to God, which spreads among those who are being saved and those who are being lost" (2 Cor 2 : 15). The

13. C. D. 6 : 19.

14. R. Le Deaut, "Pentecote et tradition Juive" *Spiritus* No. 7 (1961) 127-144. E. Noack, "The day of Pentecost in Jubilees, Qumran and Acts" *Ann. Seved Theol. Stud.* 1 (1962) 73 - 95.

real beauty and meaning of the New Covenant consists in the fact that the ministers carry about them the sweet odour of Christ through their sincerity and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Later on Paul is dealing with the subject of sincerity that should characterise the life of an apostle (2 Cor 4 : 1-6). They have to commend themselves to everyone's good conscience. They carry this spiritual treasure in common clay pots and thereby show that the power that sustains them belongs to God. Thus they reveal their human weakness and God's supreme power. Even as they die, the life of Christ is manifested in them and in the life of the believers as well. So there is no question of any discouragement and despair. Paul writes: "Even though our physical being is gradually decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day" (2 Cor 4 : 16).

The characteristic note of the ministers of the New Covenant is their prophetic role. The prophets of the Old Testament were the greatest defenders of the Covenant and it was the cause for which they fought, suffered and died. As their faith in the people dwindled, their hope in the future increased and that made them the great men of the Old Testament. This hope took different forms of expression and the most important one among them was the expectation of the New Covenant. Once this New Covenant was established by Christ in his death and resurrection, the ministers of this New Covenant had to associate themselves with it through their own suffering and death. It was no more question of the external pomp and splendour of the theophany of Sinai but the inner vitality and dynamism of the Spirit of the Risen Lord.

It was in the Corinthian community that Paul found the best atmosphere to reflect on the various aspects of a covenant community. In his two letters¹⁵ to the Corinthian commu-

15. In fact, Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthians the first and the third got lost (cf 1 Cor 5 : 9; 2 Cor 2 : 34).

nity Paul explained to them how they had to develop a genuine community in their midst. The community was not dissolved; but it had many divisive tendencies which affected its growth, unity, mission, beliefs, ethics, tradition, baptism, Eucharist, and its relationship to other communities. By addressing each of these areas, Paul tried to assist the young community in its developmental struggles. The question was one of creating inner unity and guiding them in their relationship with other communities which were not Christian. The conviction Paul had gained about the uniqueness and universality of the New Covenant enabled Paul to engage himself in his task of building up that community. Thus the Corinthian community remains as a model for contemporary community building along radical lines.

The post-Vatican Church is trying to emphasise its role in encouraging Christian communities to unfold their covenantal aspects insofar as these communities manifest their 'people-of-God aspects'. The Church is no more a society, much less a 'perfect society' as understood in medieval times. It is rather the community of the covenanted people of God united in Christ and rooted in the Spirit. The only way in which a relevant and meaningful Christian life develops in our times both at the family and the social levels is by encouraging the covenantal dimensions of the Christian community. The concept of the Covenant is not any antiquated and outmoded one. The basic idea is that of personal relationship exercised in a responsible manner. It is precisely this that the Church is trying to develop in our times. Paul, as a minister of the New Covenant, has set for us an example and it is now our task to take up the challenge in a meaningful manner.

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Johannine Vision of Covenant Community

If we look at the Johannine writings¹ from a philological point of view, any talk of a Johannine vision of covenant community may appear to be out of place, since the two terms, 'covenant' and 'community', specifying the object of this vision are lacking in them. Whereas the word 'covenant' (*diathēkē*) is totally absent in these writings, 'church' (*ekklesia*), the most common NT term for Christian community, is found only thrice and that too in a minor (and the shortest) writing among these, namely, in 3 Jn 6, 9 and 10. This, however, demonstrates, as generally acknowledged, only how a purely philological approach in such cases can be misleading. For in John, in spite of the rarity of the specific terminology, those who believe in Christ are seen as constituting an intimate community, indeed the covenant community. It is the absence of such a vision in John that would have been surprising, in view of the widely reflected consciousness of the early Christians that they were the people of the covenant, the new covenant, established through the redemptive act of Jesus Christ.²

1. The concept of community

In John we find a conception of Christian community that is based, naturally, more on internal union than external organization. This union is the result of faith in Jesus, the Son of God, which enables the believer to participate in the

1. By Johannine Writings are meant the gospel and the three letters traditionally ascribed to John. We leave out the Book of Revelation, as usually done in a discussion of this kind, because of the peculiar nature of that work and its distinctive character.

2. see Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:19-20; I Cor 11:23-26; 2 Cor 3; Gal 4:21-28; Heb 7:22; 8:6-13; 10:14-17.

divine life,³ because the Son is the Word spoken by God to give life to men (Jn. 1:4; I Jn 1:1-2), and the very purpose of his mission was precisely to invite men to have a share in the divine life and to communicate it to them (Jn 3:16; 10:10; I Jn 4:9), in so far as the Father has communicated his own life to the Son (5:26) and thus the Son has become the source of this life for men.⁴ The divine life, whose principle is the Spirit (Jn 6:63), flowing from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the believers binds them all together in a dynamic communion of life and that is what John means by the words: to have (eternal) life. The possession of this life is invariably dependent on faith in the Son, since in Johannine view to believe in the Son means to accept him (Jn 5:43) and to come into vital contact with him (Jn 6:35; 7:37-38) by committing oneself to him⁵ through the acceptance of his word, which is his extension⁶ and which is made accessible to men by the proclamation of his witnesses (Jn 15:27; I Jn 1:1-3).

John describes this vital communion in different terms which highlight one or the other dimension of this union. The intimate relationship resulting from the sharing of the divine life by the believers is indicated in terms of their divine filiation. The imagery of begetting is an obvious one to express the idea of communication of life and the relationship resulting from it. In the Gospel the necessity and manner of the "begetting from above" which can take place only when the Son has ascended to the Father and through faith in him,

3. Jn 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; 20:31; I Jn 5:11-13.

4. Jn 10:27f; 11:25f; 14:6; 17:2f.

5. The frequent use of the Greek expression *pisteuein eis* (which literally means "to believe into" in John with Jesus (31 times) or the name of Jesus (4 times) as its object underscores this dynamic, commitment aspect of faith.

6. In John we find an equation between to believe in Jesus (Jn 4:21; 5:38, 46; 8:45f; 10:37f) and to believe in his word (Jn 2:22; 4:50; 5:47); to receive Jesus (Jn 5:43) and to receive his testimony (Jn 3:11); to abide in him (Jn 15:4,7) and to abide in his word (Jn 3:31).

are stressed (Jn 3:2-21), and this divine begetting is summarily indicated as having become reality with Jesus' resurrection. In contrast to the Synoptics, in the Fourth Gospel Jesus before his glorification (i. e. his death and resurrection) does not speak of God to the disciples as "your Father" or "our Father", but "my Father", nor does he call them "my brothers"; but precisely after his resurrection he speaks of the disciples as "my brothers" and of God as "my Father and your Father" (Jn 20:17). Anticipating this, in the Prologue of the Gospel the salvific work of the incarnate Word is described as enabling those who believed in his name to become children of God (Jn 1:12) and they are qualified as those who have been begotten by God (Jn 1:13). In the post-resurrection perspective of I John the believers are therefore those who have been begotten by God, namely, the children of God. Thus in I Jn 3:1 the author of the Epistle solemnly asserts, "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are", and in the next verse he repeats the same with more emphasis on the actual state, "Beloved, we are God's children now".⁷ The divine filiation of the believer is not, however, simply a relationship of the individual as such with God, but it involves a relationship between those who have been begotten by God. This horizontal dimension of the relation is implied in the invariably plural use of *tekna tou theou* (children of God)⁸ and it is explicit in the designation of the fellow-believers as "brothers".⁹ Thus

7. Elsewhere in the Epistle the criteria are given by which the children of God can be recognized and the believers can measure their own state of divine filiation. See I Jn 2:29; 3:9-10; 4:7; 5:1, 18).

8. Jn 1:12; IJn 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2; also Jn 11:52).

9. Jn 21:23; I Jn 2:9; 10,11; 3:10,13,14,15,16,17; 4:20, 21; 5:16; 3 Jn 3,5,10. Though the term "brothers" (*adelphos*) could have also the broader signification of kinsman, compatriot, companion etc., in these Johannine passages the "brothers" are the fellow-believers in Christ, insofar as they have been begotten by God, i. e., they are the children of the same Father, God (see I Jn 4:21-5:1).

according to the Johannine view the believers constitute one family with God as their Father and in this respect the post-resurrection designation of the disciples by the Johannine Jesus as his brothers, in strict relation with the reference to God as his Father and their Father in Jn 20:17, is quite significant.¹⁰ Moreover, the demand to love one another, specified in I John as to love the brethren, is dependent on this familial understanding of the relationship between the believers.

The relationship the believers have with God through Christ is described as "remaining (abiding) in" and "being in", which are almost equivalents (see Jn 14:10). These expressions are used to signify the mutual relationship of the Father and the Son¹¹, of the Father and believers¹², and of the Son and the believers¹³, as well as the believers' relationship with both the Father and the Son.¹⁴ The relationship thereby meant is, therefore, a trilateral one involving the Father, the Son and the believers; it is a union between the Father and the Son in which the believers participate. In Jn 10:38, "the Father in me and I in the Father", is equivalent to and an elucidation of "the Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30). This unity of the Father and the Son as reciprocal "being in" and as the basis and model of the unity of the believers is developed in Jn 17:20-26. The believers' being in the Father and in the Son results in an intimate union between the believers themselves (Jn 17:21), and as (Jn 17:23,) "I in them and you in me", shows, the union bet-

10. It is further to be noted that after this only the disciples as such are referred to as "brothers" in the Gospel in 21:23.

11. "To be in", Jn 10:38; 14:10,11; 17:21; see also Jn 14:20; 17:23; the Father remains in the Son Jn 14:10.

12. "to remain in" I Jn 3:24a; 4:13,15,16; (also I Jn 2:6 3:24b; 4:12; "to be in", IJn 4:4; 2:5.

13. "to be in", Jn 14:20 (also Jn 17:23,26; I Jn 5:20); "to remain in", Jn 6:56; 15:4,5 (also Jn 15:4,6,7; I Jn 2:27,28;3:6).

14. "to be in", Jn 17:21; "to remain in", I Jn 2:24 (see also Jn 14:23)

ween the Father and the Son is transferred through the Son to the believers. This relationship is, moreover, a dynamic union. The "works" of the Son are the works of the Father who remains in him and therefore these very works manifest that he is in the Father and the Father in him (Jn 14:10-11; also 10:37-38). Similarly, the participation of the believers in the union between the Father and the Son through the presence of the Son in them is also a participation in 'the love by which the Father loved the Son' (Jn 17:26) which is the source of the mutual love of the believers; and those who believe in the Son, namely, those who keep his word and in whom the Father and the Son abide (Jn 14:23), will do the works of the Son (Jn 14:12), just as the Son does the works of the Father because he is in the Father and the Father in him. It is this same idea that is conveyed through the *mashal* of vine and branches in Jn 15:4-7. This figure drawn to illustrate the relationship of "remaining in" between Christ and the disciples implies that this "remaining in" involves the sharing of the life of Christ by the disciples. This idea is found more clearly in Jn 6:54-57. A comparison of the parallel verses 54 and 56 shows that "to have eternal life" (v. 54) is equivalent to "his remaining in me and mine in him" (v.56), and v.57 elucidates it further: "to remain in me and I in him" means "to live because of me as I live because of the Father". In other words, this tripartite relationship of "remaining in" and "being in" ultimately means that the believers live with the life that flows from the Father to the Son joining them together into one, constituting a dynamic communion. It is in this sense that we have to understand the statements in I John, where, besides asserting that the believers are in Christ (I Jn 2:27) and that they are "in God (being) in his Son Jesus Christ" (I Jn 5:20), the author of the Epistle lays down the criteria of this relationship¹⁵, such as keeping the commandments, confessing the true faith in Jesus Christ and loving one another, which should therefore be seen as the result of this relationship.

15. I Jn 2:5-6; 3:24; 4:12,13,15,16.

In I John the relationship that exists between the Father, the Son and the believers and that is also the basis of the unity between the believers, is presented in terms of *koinōnia* (fellowship: I Jn 1:3,6,7). The term implies the idea of participation, of having something in common, and thus communion. As I Jn 1:3 shows, it is a communion of the believers with the Father and the Son and between the believers in virtue of their acceptance of the word of God, and, implicitly, the consequent sharing of the divine life.

2. Christian community as new covenantal community

The author of I John considered the Christian community with which he was associated as the one in which was being actualized the situation of Jesus' disciples foreseen in the Gospel for the period after his departure to the Father. In particular, **this community** has the characteristics of the people of the new covenant foretold by the prophets. According to Jer 31:31-34, where a new covenant is promised in place of the original covenant that has been violated by the people, the main features of this new covenant are that God will transform the people interiorly placing his torah (which is equivalent to the word of God) within them and writing it upon their hearts, and thus ensure their fidelity towards him he will restore the covenant relation, the people will know him and he will forgive their sins definitively. In the parallel promises of Ezekiel the interior renewal of the people is described as God giving them a new heart and a new spirit which is God's own Spirit (Ez 36:22-32, esp. 26-27); and as another dimension of the covenantal relationship to be restored, which is expressed, as in Jeremiah, through the so called covenant formula, "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33; Ez 36:28; 37:23,27), the promise of the everlasting presence of God among the people is also given (Ez 37:26-27). In Deutero Isaiah, on the other hand, the Servant of Yahweh is to be the personification of Yahweh's covenant (Is 42:6; 49:8), and he through his vicarious suffering is to obtain pardon for the people's guilt (Is 52:13-53:12).

The community of those whose sins have been forgiven

According to I John, the true believers who are in communion with God and Christ and with one another, are those whose sins have been forgiven on account of their faith in Jesus Christ (I Jn 2:12). This gift of forgiveness is the result of God's love which was manifested in sending his Son as saviour of the world and expiation for sins (4:9-10,14), and the Father still continues his forgiving act in favour of the believers (I Jn 1:9) and their purification from sin is going on in virtue of the continuing mediation of Jesus Christ as intercessor and expiation before the Father (I Jn 2:1-2) and through the cleansing power of his blood (I Jn 1:7).

In I Jn 1:9 God's continuing forgiveness and purification of the believers' sins are the result of his fidelity and justice. These two divine attributes, faithful and just, are those of the covenant God in the OT, and they signify God's fidelity to his covenant and promises (Dt 7:9; 32:4) and thus here God's covenantal mercy and fidelity, especially to his promises of forgiveness, are given as the reason for obtaining pardon. The formulation of this passage brings to our mind one of such promises, namely Jer 33:8, a promise belonging to the context of the new covenant. Another passage that recalls the new covenant is I Jn 2:12-14, where the forgiveness granted to the believers is declared as the first of a complex of three blessings corresponding to those of the new covenant, the other two being the knowledge of the Father and of the Son, and the efficacious immanent word of God. Moreover, the description of Jesus as the mediator of forgiveness reminds us of the Servant of God in Deutero-Isaiah.¹⁶

16. Like the Servant it is through his expiatory death that Christ, the just one, has obtained forgiveness (cf. I Jn 2:2; 3:16; 4:10) and in both cases this expiation has an intercessory character (Is 53:12; I Jn 2:1); in I Jn 3:16, in the statement, "he laid down his life for us", there is a resonance of Is 53:10. In the Gospel also Jesus is presented as the fulfilment of what has been said about the Servant (Jn 1:29; 12:38, etc.).

The Community of those who have been interiorly transformed

In I John we find also the idea that the believers have been interiorly transformed by means of dynamic principles given them by God, rendering them capable of fully responding to his call. These divine gifts as mentioned in the Epistle are the word of God, the truth, the chrism (*chrisma*), the seed of God, the Spirit of God and what is called in Greek *dianoia*.

The word of God abides in the believers and it renders them strong and victorious over the "evil one" (I Jn 2:14). The word is the principle of their divine generation and as such it is called the "seed of God" and the efficacy of this word is such that it renders impeccable those in whom it abides and impeccability is the prerogative of the true believers, the children of God (I Jn 3:9; comp. I Pet 1:23). The "truth" is equivalent to the word of God (Jn 17:17; comp. Jn 8:37 with 40) and it is implicitly asserted that the truth is in the believers and it is the inner principle of correct Christian conduct.¹⁷

The author of I John refers to the fact that God has given the believers his Spirit and that the Spirit abides in them; the Spirit imparted by God to the believer is the efficacious principle of the observance of the commandments which consist in the (confession of) true faith in Jesus and Christian love (I Jn 3:23-24; 4:12-15). In I Jn 2:20 and 27 the Spirit which the believers have received and which remains in them is signified by the term *Chrisma*,¹⁸ probably referring to the Spirit they have received at the Christian initiation as a participation in the Spirit with which Jesus has been anointed

17. I Jn 1:8; 2:4; see also 3:18. The dynamism of the truth is evident in Jn 8:32, where the truth is deliverer from sin. In 2 Jn 1-2 it is clearly indicated that the truth remains in the believers and the truth which abides in them and will be with them for ever, is the source of Christian love.

18. Chrism is the anglicised form of the Greek word *Chrisma* which primarily means anointing oil.

(see Lk 4:18; Acts 10:38). In the Bible anointing symbolized the communication of the Spirit (see eg. I Sam 16:13) and consequently the anointing oil could be seen as a symbol of the Spirit. The fact that the properties of the Chrism described in I Jn 2:27 remarkably correspond to those of the Spirit which Jesus promised to his disciples (see Jn 14:17, 26; 16:13), shows that what is meant here is the same Spirit. The Spirit the believers have received in fulfilment of Jesus' promise, abides in them and teaches them giving them all such a knowledge of the truth that they have no need that any one should teach them, and the teaching of the Spirit is the norm of their remaining in the Son (see also I Jn 5:6-8).

The author of the Epistle expresses the conviction of the believers that the Son of God has given them *dianoia* to know the True One, namely, God, and that therefore in fact they know him and they are in God by being in his Son Jesus Christ (I John 5:20). As it is evident from the context this gift they have received from the Son is a faculty to know God. The term *dianoia*, which in Greek literature is used to signify thought or the power of thought and understanding, is employed very frequently in the LXX version of the OT where it mostly translates the Hebrew word for heart.¹⁹ The gift the Son has given is, therefore, to put it in biblical language, a heart to know God.

It is easily noticeable that this conception of the interior transformation through the divine gifts of the word and the Spirit which abide in the believers and through a special faculty - a heart - granted them to know God, all ordained to the divine communion of the believers and to guarantee against violating it, corresponds to the new covenantal promises of the OT, which in one form or another continued to be the object of the eschatological expectations in late Judaism and which find expression also in the other parts of the NT. In fact in this respect too I Jn has more than a mere

19. See Gen 17:17; 45:26; Ex 28:3; 35:35; Dt 28:28, Is 57:11; Job 1:5; Prov. 2:10.

thematic correspondence to the new covenantal promises. The Spirit of God as interior dynamic principle is a central theme in Ezechiel's vision of the eschatological renewal and it corresponds to the Jeremian new covenantal promise of the interiorization of the torah. In I Jn the language used to describe the effect of the chrism-Spirit abiding in the believers has a strong resonance of the promise in Jer 31:34, so that we can justifiably say that in I Jn 2:20,27 the author alludes to the new covenantal promises by combining the Ezechielian promise of the Spirit with elements from the Jeremian promise. Thus he presents the Spirit communicated to the believers in fulfilment of the promise made by Jesus as the fulfilment of these promises. Moreover I Jn 3:24 and 4:13 where the author speaks of the Spirit God has given us remind us of the promise of the Spirit in Jer 36:27. The assertion about *dianoia* in 5:20 shows remarkable literary and thematic correspondence with the promise in Jer 24:7 which is parallel to Jer 31:33-34 and Ez 56:26-28. And the declarations in 2:14 that the word of God abides in the believers and that they have known God remind of Jeremiah's prophecy. Similarly in 3:9 the impeccability resulting from the abiding word corresponds to the idea of indefectability present in the new covenantal promises.

The new covenantal dimension of the communion

The promise of the restoration of the relation between God and the people in the new covenant, "I will be their God and they shall be my people" is the same as the formula employed to define the relationship in the old covenant and it signifies an intimate relationship between God and the people who are considered the children of God²⁰ and, consequently, united by the bond of brotherhood among themselves.²¹ This covenantal relationship includes also the dynamic presence of God among the people. In the promised new covenant what is

20. Cf. Dt 14:1-2; 32:5,6,9,18,19,20,36,43; Is 1:2-4; Hos 1:9-2:1, etc.

21. Lev. 19:17-18; Dt 15:2,3,7,9,11,12 etc.

specifically new in this relationship is that as the result of the divine intervention in transforming the people interiorly this relationship is a divine gift and it is no more dependent on the people's observance of God's commandments as its condition, but the fulfilment of the divine will is the result and the necessary expression of this gift and the response to it. We notice the correspondence between this eschatological vision of the prophets and the conception of I Jn regarding the believers' communion with God. The idea of the Christian community as the fellowship (*koinōnia*) of the believers with God and his Son and with one another due to their participation in the divine life in virtue of their acceptance of the divine revelation is analogous to that of the covenantal community. Eternal life is also a theme that can be understood in a covenantal context in so far as life is seen in the OT and Judaism as a covenantal blessing. The promises of the divine presence and of divine filiation as eschatological gifts and as aspects of the restoration of the covenantal relation expressed by the covenant formula were known to the Jewish and Christian circles at the beginning of the Christian era (see Jubilees 1:17-18, 24-25; 2 Cor 6:16-18). In I Jn the presence of God and Christ in the believers signified by the words "to remain in" and "to be in" has a correspondence to the understanding of the promise of the divine presence in the Jewish and Christian circles. Similarly also the conception of the divine filiation of the believers. The solemn affirmation in Jn 3:1, "see what love the Father has given us, that we should be called the children of God" has distinct echoes of Hos 2:1b, quoted in Jub 1:25 and Rom 9:26, "they will be called the sons of the living God". And the statement in I Jn 3:2, "Beloved, we are God's children now" reminds us of the promise quoted in Jub 1:24 and 2 Cor 6:18, "I will be their Father and they shall be my children". Moreover, the idea that the believers are brothers on account of their divine filiation is in accordance with the OT conception of the brotherhood of the people resulting from their covenantal filial relation with God.

Christian conduct as covenantal response

I John abounds in statements indicating the criteria of the communion with God. The principal and positive criteria are walking in the light, doing righteousness, keeping the commandments which consist in the confession of faith in Jesus Christ and fraternal love. Walking in light and doing righteousness are also Christologically determined and signify basically the practice of love inspired by faith. The actions indicated as the criteria of the divine communion are considered its result, insofar as the relationship with God has a dynamic effect on the believers. On the other hand, the author frequently exhorts the members of the community to do what he has presented as the criteria of the communion with God. These are therefore considered their responses to God who has communicated himself, insofar as they are the expressions of God acting on them, who, however, should be actively open to him and his workings.

The basic and the most important correspondence between I John's vision of the Christian response and the new covenant prophecies is that as announced by the prophets the fulfilment of God's will by the Christians is a divine gift and result of their effective interior transformation by God and the dynamic manifestation of the personal union God has established with them. The terms and expressions employed to signify this response are borrowed from the OT and Judaism, where they have been used to denote the covenantal obligation of the people. The love for the brethren demanded and expected from the Christians as the consequence of their relationship with God and as the expression of their love for God is also a covenantal theme. The designation of the commandment of love as "a new commandment" evokes the idea of the "new covenant".

The final exhortation, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols", with which I John is concluded, is a fitting finale. It should be understood in the light of the new covenantal contacts in I John and of idols, namely, other gods, as cause of the rupture of the covenantal relation in the OT and Judaism and of the promise in Ezekiel that God will purify the people from idols in the new covenant (Ez 36:25). This

exhortation, where the term "idols" is used figuratively, is meant to remind the members of the community to shun the doctrine and conduct of the heretics, which are incompatible with the new covenant of which they, the true believers, are the beneficiaries.

3. The final picture

The picture of the Christian community that we find in I John is, therefore, that of the new covenantal community in which the expectations of the prophets are fulfilled. The author of the Epistle possesses the Christian belief that the new covenant has been inaugurated through Jesus Christ, and he wants to recall it to the members of the community.

This positive vision of the Christian existence has a counter aspect. The member of the Christian community that the author addresses find themselves in an eschatological situation of rebellion against God and opposition to those who believe in Jesus Christ (I Jn 2:18). This rebellion is led by the evil one, the devil, and by his allies, the heretics, who belong to the "world" (I Jn 3:1,13; 4:5 6; 5:19). The author assures his community that because of the divine intervention in their favour the believers have overcome these opponents (I Jn 2:13 14; 4:4; 5:4 5, 18-19). He nevertheless finds it necessary to warn them to remain on guard: the enemies have been defeated but not vanquished (see I Jn 2:15 17, 26; 3:7; 4:1; 5:21). Thus while the author sees the blessings the true believers have as the realization of the eschatological covenant, he depicts the opposition they experience as that expected in the final era against the people of God and as the one which, according to the Gospel tradition, was foretold by Jesus (see Jn 15:18-19,21; 16:3; 17:14,16).

Although the author of the Epistle presents the new covenantal blessings as already granted to the believers, he does not, however, hide his awareness that not all members of the community in fact have the full possession of these: impeccability is the prerogative of the true Christians, but there is the possibility that some members of the community commit sin (see I Jn 2:1); consequently, although sins have

been forgiven to them, the purification is being continued; they have in them the Spirit and the divine word guaranteeing their response to God, but the author thinks that he should remind them of the conduct expected from them; they are already the children of God and have communion with him and his Son, but a growth of this relationship is still possible and its culmination is awaited at the parousia (see I Jn 3:2-3).

The picture of the Christian existence we find in I John is briefly as follows. God has fulfilled his promises of a new covenant through his Son Jesus Christ. The Christians who remain faithful in their belief in Jesus are its beneficiaries. God has taken the initiative in realizing his promises, but the individual members of the community are in the process of benefiting by it and the culmination of this process will be at the parousia. Meanwhile the believers, the children of God, are opposed by the evil one and his allies who try to prevent the realization of God's designs. This picture is the end-product of a theological interpretation of the historical situation of the community by an early Christian theologian.

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The Covenantal Aspect of the Book of Psalms

In the book of psalms we have the pouring out of the soul of Israel, God's chosen people, before their God (Ps 42:4; 61:8; 142:2; 145:7) in different moods and contexts. In these psalms which had been composed over a period of seven hundred years and some of which have undergone some kind of 're-readings', we have a cross section of the belief and piety of the Israelites. Our attempt here is to show that the covenant theme is central to a realistic understanding of the psalms at least as we have them now. We are not very much concerned about the tradition-historical aspect of the psalms, though this is something which cannot be ignored by any serious scholar today. We shall look at the different types of psalms and examine the theological thoughts behind them.

A covenant people

"Israel's religion rested in no abstract theological propositions, but in the memory of historical experience as interpreted and responded in faith. Israel believed that Yahweh, her God, had by his mighty acts rescued her from Egypt and by, covenant, had made her his people.¹ Peoples of heterogeneous origins became one through the covenant. In the Old Testament we have the covenant with Abraham (Gen 15 §17), the Mosaic covenant (Ex 19) and the Davidic covenant (2Sam 7:5ff; Ps 89:20-26, Ps 132). The original covenant which was with Abraham is extended to the whole nation in the Sinaitic covenant and the same focusses on the Davidic family from which the 'Anointed One' was to come.

The basic idea of the covenant is that "I will take you for my people, and I will be your God" (Ex 6:7; Dt 29:13;

1. John Bright, *A History of Israel*, SCM Press, 1972, P. 144

Jer 7:23; Ezk 11:20; Hos 2:25). Israel belongs to God in a unique way. Between Yahweh and his people there is a new relationship, the relationship of *Hesed* which is one of kinship, friendship, community and solidarity. There is a vertical relationship of the people to Yahweh and a horizontal relationship of the people among themselves. This covenant community and solidarity are very clear in the psalms where we see the people approaching their God with one heart in joy and misery. Of course, the horizontal relationship of the people is not very much in focus here as it is a question of standing before God which we have in the psalms.

The relation of the psalms to the cult has been well noted by the great scholars Hermann Gunkel and Sigmond Mowinckel. It is Artur Weisser who found the covenant as a key to the understanding of many of the psalms, especially the Enthronement psalms. Recent authors have seen the covenant aspect as the key to the better understanding of the psalms, though nobody has, it seems, gone beyond Weisser in this respect. R. E. Clemens feels that "to prophets and the psalmists the covenant tradition formed the heart of their religion."²

Psalms of praise

In these psalms the general mood is one of rejoicing in the Lord. Here some attributes of God or some benevolent actions of God may become the motive of praise. Of course, it is the experience of God in Israel's history, and its memory, and celebration here is a "re-presentation" (Dt 5:1 3) of the same. Here we take psalms 33 as an example:

Artur Weisser thinks that Ps 33 should have been composed for the Covenant Festival.³ The psalms reminds one of the covenant people whose God is the Lord' and for whom they are the chosen heritage (v. 12). In this psalm we have

2. Artur Weisser, *The Psalms*, SCM Press, London, 1962.

3. R. E. Clemens, *Prophecy and Covenant*, Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 43, SCM Press, London, 1965, p. 18.

also the typically covenant word of relationship, steadfast love three times (v v. 5, 18, 227). Here we may think of the covenant loyalty of Yahweh to his people, his inheritance (v. 12). Another important covenant word is *emeth* which points to the covenant faithfulness of Yahweh. In this psalm the Lord is praised for many things, but the basic reason is the thought of the covenant relationship. This is true of most of the psalms of praise.

Under these psalms we have the Psalms of Yahweh's Kingship which could be seen as related to the Ark of the covenant which symbolised the presence of the Lord. Here, again, we may think of the covenant God's presence among his people. The Zion songs or even the Pilgrimage songs could also be seen like this.

Psalms of trust

In the psalms of trust also there is the strong feeling that the people belong to Yahweh and that he is with them (Ps 23:4). The covenant God is a sure rock of security (125), a source of blessing (115, 129), and peace (Ps 125). The figure of the good shepherd in ps 23 is a touching description of the way the Lord leads, guides and feeds his flock Israel. Here one could think of the desert experience, though there is no explicit reference to it in the psalms. But who are the enemies before whom the Lord prepares a table?

Psalms of lamentation

Here we could think of the penitential psalms in which the psalmist is sad that he offended his covenant God. He has offended the God of his salvation (Ps 51:4, 14). He prays God's mercy according to his covenant love (Ps 51:1).

In the psalms of lamentation the psalmist feels strongly that his God has forgotten him or has abandoned him (Ps 22: 1; 69:17). In these psalms the appeal to the covenant loyalty is remarkable. "Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of thy steadfast love" (Ps 6:4).

In Ps 79 which is a typical psalm of community lamentation the covenant relationship is very much accented. The heathens have come into *thy inheritance* (v. 1); defiled *thy holy temple*; given away the bodies of *thy servants* (v. 2). In this psalm there is the strong separation of "We" from "They"; between God's people and the other nations. The people ask them, "Where is their God? (v. 10). The lament ends with a note of trust from the part of God's people: "Then we thy people, the flock of thy pasture..." (13). These are the people who call on Yahweh's name; they are his favoured people. Here we do not have the word covenant or the typical covenant expressions of steadfast love and faithfulness, still the general tone of the psalm is evidently covenantal. In psalms of lamentation the appeal to Yahweh's *Hesed* is very common.⁴

The wisdom psalms

The foundation of Israelite wisdom is the fear of Yahweh which is a filial and reverential respect for God which is founded on Israel's special relationship to God. The first psalm begins with the way of the just and the way of the wicked. Could here one think of the way of the covenant and that of non-covenant? Ps. 119 which is the longest psalm could perhaps be seen as a meditation on the stipulations of the covenant. Or would one think of it as a kind of legalism? As it stands, it could very well be taken as an appreciation of the covenant relationship and its obligations.

Covenant renewal

Artur Weisser sees some of the psalms in the context of covenant renewal. A convincing case is that of Ps 50. It describes the theophany on Sinai (V. 1,6,7). The making of the covenant is mentioned in v. 5. "I am God your God" (v. 7). Here the people are chided for non observance of the covenant stipulations. Here the violation of solidarity among the covenant brothers is also rebuked (vv. 17-20).

4. Roland E. Murphy, *The Psalms, Job, Proclamation Commentaries*, Fortress Press, 1977, p. 18.

The Sinai theophany is beautifully reflected here in the context of covenant renewal. God calls his people to give an account of its behaviour. The community as one is responsible before its God who is its protector and defender. The covenant people are to be loyal to Yahweh as well as to the covenant members.

Conclusion

This essay has been written with a postoral aim, namely, the psalms which are prayed very much in the church are to be shown as the response of God's people to what he has done for them in their history. The people of God pray to its familial covenant God through the psalms which remind them of all that God has done, especially the covenants through which they were brought to closer union with God. Today when I pray the psalms I am to enter into the history and spirit of God's people who are spritually my forefathers.

In the psalms we encounter a living and active God who is concerned about us, to whom we are related closely. The covenant God whom Israel praised and thanked and in whom they trusted and before whom they lamented has become our brother in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who prays and weeps for us as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews..

George Kaniarakath

Book Reviews

THE LORD'S PRAYER AND JEWISH LITURGY, Jakob J. Petuchowski and Michael Brocke (eds.), Burns & Oates, London, 1978.

The Oratio Dominica Foundation had its first international and interdenominational conference at Freiburg im Breisgau in West Germany in 1973. The theme for discussion at the conference was the Lord's prayer and its proceedings were edited and published by Michael Brocke, Jakob J. Petuchowski and Walter Stolz in 1974 with the title, *Das Vaterunser - Gemeinsames im Beten von Juden und Christen*. The present English edition has incorporated new materials and left out some of the original articles.

The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy presents us with a scholarly picture of the original setting of the Lord's prayer which has its roots in the Bible and synagogal worship. As noted in the introduction, the book represents the possibility of varying interpretations which is a healthy sign of openness and ecumenism.

The book is divided into four parts on the basis of the evolution of the ideas throughout the centuries. The first article by Alfons Deissler throws much light on the OT roots of the prayer taught by Jesus. Deissler has been able to show that "a surprisingly large number of links have become apparent between the belief and prayer of Israel on the one hand and the Lord's prayer on the other... wide comprehensive perspective have opened up which make apparent or underscore the close homogeneousness of both Testaments" (p.16-17). In the second part Jakob J. Petuchowski makes an excellent selection and translation of "Jewish Prayer Texts of the Rabbinic Period". He also gives a beautiful description of

"The Liturgy of the Synagogue". Baruck Graubald gives an explanation of the *Kaddish* prayer which has a prominent place in Synagogal worship today. Simon Lauer writes about the "*Abhinu Malkemu: Our Father, Our King!*" - a prayer which "is among the high points of the service on the High Holidays, and has deeply penetrated into the people's consciousness". Joseph Heinemann shows us the Jewish liturgical background of the Lord's Prayer. In the third part of the book we are led into the New Testament where Anton Vögtle describes the Lord's Prayer as belonging to the Jews and Christians. John M. Oesreicher has written about the "Abba, Father" and its ancient and modern implications in a thought-provoking way. The spiritual wealth of this great prayer is analysed by Jean Carmignac. In the fourth part we have the practical applications of the prayer in the life of the Church. Gordon J. Bahr writes how this prayer has been used in the primitive Church. Its pastoral usage is explored by Josef Bommer. How it is to be taught is treated by Herbert Jochum. In the final article on "The Liturgies of Synagogue and Church", Michael Brocke gives us an excellent introduction to the Jewish prayer literature.

The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy can be read with interest and profit. It enlightens the reader on the Old Testament synagogal background of the Lord's prayer which is so much cherished and prayed by Christians all over the world. The book is written in an ecumenical spirit and it does really help to foster mutual understanding and appreciation among the Jews and Christians.

G. Kaniarakath

LIBERATED LIFE. IDEAL of Jīvanmukti in Indian Religions. specially in Saiva Siddhānta. By Chacko Valiaveetil. Pp, xvi-204. Paperback Rs. 30/- \$6. Hardbound Rs. 37/- \$7. For copies: Dialogue Series, Arul Anandar College, Karumathur - 626514, Madurai Dt.

Liberation is a key word in political thinking to-day. Every where people are seeking economic, social and political liberation. But there is a more fundamental liberation, which has been sought in India from the earliest times, liberation from not only political but all human bondage, from sin, suffering and death. In India the ideal man has always been the '*jīvanmukta*', the man who is liberated while still alive and has achieved total freedom. This is the subject of this very profound study of Chacko Valiaveetil. He studies the concept of the *jīvanmukta* from the earliest time in the Vedas and Upanishads and in Jainism and Buddhism. But his chief concern is with the concept of *jīvanmukti* in Saiva Siddhānta.

The commonly accepted view of *jīvanmukti* is that of Advaita Vedānta which stresses the unreality of this world and suggests that the *jīvanmukta*, once liberated, has no further use for this world. He has passed finally beyond and for him this world no longer exists. But for Saiva Siddhānta the world is not unreal and once liberated from the three bonds of *āṇava*, *karma* and *māya*, the *jīvanmukta* is able to see the world permeated by the presence of God and to act for the benefit of the world. This comes to him through the grace of the Lord, who is now permanently united with him.

It is obvious that a doctrine like this stressing the reality of this world and the need for service of the world is particularly meaningful to-day. There is a greater realisation to-day of the values of secular life, of the importance of economic and social change. What is required is a doctrine which shows how God can be realised not by inaction but in the midst of action. It is significant also that Saiva Siddhānta numbers among its saints people of all different castes, including

Kannappan, the outcaste. This is therefore a realist and universalist doctrine, which has a special significance to-day. It is appropriate that it should be published just when the World Tamil Conference is taking place in Madurai, when the meaning and value of Tamil Culture for the world as a whole is being manifested. This is the first time that a serious study has been made of this aspect of the doctrine of Saiva Siddhānta. It is a work of solid scholarship—it was, in fact, originally a doctoral thesis but it is presented in a clear and attractive style with an eye to the significance of this doctrine for people to day.

Bede Griffiths.

ഗ്രന്ഥപരിചയം.

അഖില കേരള ദൈവവിജ്ഞാനീയ മഹോത്സവത്തിൽ പ്രകാശിതമായ ആശയങ്ങളും അഭിപ്രായങ്ങളും നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങളും.

കേരളസഭാത്തരീക്ഷത്തിലെ ഇരുളും വെളിച്ചവും, നവീകരണത്തിന്റെ അടിയന്തരാവശ്യം, സഞ്ചയങ്ങളോടുകൂടെ ചലനാത്മകത, സഭയിൽ അത്തായരുടെ സ്ഥാനവും സ്രീസമത്വവും' കടംബം യുവജനങ്ങൾ സന്യാസം സ്ഥാപനവും സേവനവും, സുവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ സാമൂഹ്യരൂപമായ സോഷ്യലിസം, ആരാധന (ക്രമം) എന്നീ വിഷയങ്ങളെപ്പറ്റി അത്യാധുനികമായ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകൾ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന ലഘുഗ്രന്ഥം അച്ചടിച്ചു തയ്യാറായിരിക്കുന്നു.

ഇതു് പാടുള്ളതു ആളുകൾ പർച്ചാവിഷയമാക്കുന്നതു നന്നു്. പർച്ചയ്ക്കു് ഒരു പ്രശ്നാവലിയും ഇതിൽ ചേർത്തിട്ടുണ്ടു്. “സംസ്ഥാനത്തോറും മേഖലത്തോറും പർച്ചായോഗങ്ങൾ സംഘടിപ്പിക്കണം. നമുക്കു് ആശയപ്രകാശനത്തിന്നും വിമർശനത്തിന്നും ഒരു വേദി ആവശ്യമുണ്ടു്. തുറന്ന ചിന്തിക്കുന്നവർ സംഘടിച്ച് തങ്ങളുടെയും സഭയുടെയും ബോധവത്കരണത്തിനായി യത്നിക്കണം. ഇവിടെ അധിതരിപ്പിച്ച ആശയങ്ങൾ പരക്കെ അറിയാൻ വേണ്ടതു ചെയ്യണം. ഇവിടെ ആരംഭിച്ച അന്വേഷണം നാം തുടരുക.”

വില 50 പൈസ. കോപ്പികൾ ആവശ്യമുള്ളവർ താഴെ കൊടുക്കുന്ന മേൽവിലാസത്തിൽ എഴുതുക.

ജീവധാര

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